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TAGS: PREL PARM SY KN IAEA KNNP

SUBJECT: IAEA/SYRIA: SECRETARIAT STILL SEEKING COOPERATION
FROM SYRIA; NEW URANIUM CONTAMINATION FOUND AT DECLARED
FACILITY

REF: UNVIE 00071

Classified By: AMBASSADOR GREGORY L. SCHULTE FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)
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Summary

11. (SBU) The Director General's report on nuclear safeguards implementation in Syria, issued in the run-up to the June 15-19, 2009 Board of Governors meeting, concludes that "Syria needs to be more cooperative and transparent." The report indicates that Syria has not adequately responded to the IAEA's questions and requests. The new development in the Syria investigation is the finding of anthropogenic (man-made) natural uranium particles (from 2008 samples) taken at the Miniature Neutron Source Reactor (MNSR) in Damascus. The uranium was "of a type not declared at the facility," and the IAEA has not yet received a response from Syria that addresses the presence and origin of the anthropogenic uranium.

12. (C) The Director General continues to muddy the waters by again focusing on Israel in the Syria investigation, despite the "all clear" in the DG's March 2009 Board report (reftel), in which the IAEA concluded that there is a "low probability that the uranium was introduced by the use of missiles as the isotopic and chemical composition and the morphology of the particles are all inconsistent with what would be expected from the use of uranium based munitions." We expect the DG's resuscitation of the question about a "munitions origin" for the uranium at Al-Kibar (referred to by the IAEA as Dair Alzour) will provide ample fodder for Syria and its allies to attack Israel's lack of cooperation, vice Syria's lack of cooperation. Secretariat contacts tell us this mention arose from ElBaradei's sensitivity to Arab and Iranian complaints that debate at the last board focused on Syria with "nary a mention of the country that bombed the reactor."

13. (SBU) The DG's Syria report provides a strong basis for calling Syria to account for its continued failure to cooperate with the IAEA investigation. The catalogue of IAEA requests that have gone unanswered clearly indicate that Syria is blocking the investigation, and the finding of more HEU should also raise concern. The only negative aspect of the DG's report is the gratuitous request for further information from Israel about the use of DU munitions. This is clearly a red-herring, added by ElBaradei to inject "balance"; Syria will continue to hide behind NAM statements focused on Israel. The U.S. should dismiss the citing of Israel in a report about Syrian internal activities by citing the expert analysis of the "low probability" of contamination and the fact that further HEU has been discovered hundreds of

miles from the Al-Kibar site. End Summary.

IAEA Needs Syrian Cooperation

¶4. (SBU) The IAEA Director General's Report on the Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Syrian Arab Republic (GOV/2009/36), issued June 5, 2009, concludes that "Syria needs to be more cooperative and transparent." The report, issued prior to the upcoming June 15-19 Board of Governors (BOG) meeting, indicates that Syria has not adequately responded to the IAEA's questions and requests.

¶5. (SBU) With regards to the Al-Kibar site and the uranium contamination identified at the site, the only progress made by the Agency in its investigation since the March 2009 BOG is an exchange of letters with Syria that resulted in no new information or supporting documentation. The report indicates that "the information provided by Syria to date does not enable the Agency to determine the nature of the facility." In particularly harsh language, the Director General notes in his report that "it is clearly in Syria's interest to render to the Agency the necessary cooperation and transparency if it wishes the Agency to be able to corroborate its assertion about the nature of the Dair Alzour (Al-Kibar) site."

¶6. (SBU) The DG report notes the Agency has yet to receive further access to Al-Kibar and other locations where debris and equipment from the site were taken. In an April 21 letter, the IAEA again asked Syria to share the results of any assessments that it may have performed regarding the

materials used during, or resulting from, the bombing. Syria responded (in a letter dated May 24) by reiterating its earlier statements concerning the nature of the Al-Kibar installations, the water pumping infrastructure and procurement activities, and its statement regarding cooperation with entities from DPRK. The letter "did not include any of the supporting documentation requested by the Agency." The IAEA sent a final letter on June 4 reiterating its request for access and information.

¶7. (SBU) The report notes that Syria sent two letters to the Agency (dated 17 April and May 12), not to answer the Agency's questions but to question the "correctness of certain statements contained in reports, technical briefings and communications of the Agency." No additional information is provided on Syria's specific questions but the Agency subsequently reaffirmed to Syria the correctness of its statements and communications provided comments on the points raised by Syria.

New Uranium Contamination

¶8. (SBU) The significant new development since the March 2009 BOG is the finding of anthropogenic (man-made) natural uranium particles in 2008 samples taken at the Miniature Neutron Source Reactor (MNSR) in Damascus, a declared facility. The uranium was "of a type not declared at the facility." In correspondence with Syria on the matter, the report notes that Syria does not address the presence and origin of the anthropogenic uranium. The IAEA indicates that further analysis is required by the Agency to determine whether a connection exists between these particles and the uranium particles found at the Al-Kibar site. (Comment: The finding of unexplained uranium at a locale other than the bombed reactor site makes the Syrian claim that uranium at Al-Kibar was introduced via Israeli bombs less compelling. It will also be difficult for Syria to dodge the Agency's questions since the uranium was found at a declared nuclear facility under Agency safeguards. End Comment.)

¶9. (SBU) The report notes that the presence and origin of the

uranium particles, as well as those found at the Al-Kibar sites "needs to be understood by the Agency."

DG "Equally" Seeks Israeli Cooperation

¶110. (SBU) The Director General again focuses on Israel in the Syria investigation, by "equally" calling on Israel to cooperate with the Agency. The IAEA sent a May 20 letter to Israel requesting "specific information concerning its statements about whether the munitions used in the destruction of the building at Dair Alzour (Al-Kibar) could have been the source of the uranium particles found on the site." This is in spite of the Agency's stated assessment that there is a "low probability that the uranium particles found at the Dair Alzour (Al-Kibar) site were introduced by use of the missiles used to destroy the building on that site," and in spite of the reported absence of progress toward substantiating Syria's explanation. (Comment: The DG Report for the March 2009 Board meeting added that that the judgment of a low probability for a munitions origin was due to the isotopic and chemical composition and the morphology of the particles, which are all inconsistent with what would be expected from the use of uranium based munitions.)

¶111. (C) Speaking privately June 8 with DCM, ElBaradei's chief of staff, Antoine van Dongen, acknowledged that reference to Israel and inquiry into depleted uranium munitions were "distractions" from the important issue of Syrian non-cooperation. He admitted that ElBaradei had inserted the Israel issue due to a personal sense that "his" constituents were antagonized that the Secretariat was devoting so much attention to Syrian actions with "nary a mention of the country that bombed the reactor."

Information Sharing

¶112. (SBU) The Director General in the current report repeats his call for States that may possess relevant information to make such information available to the Agency and to agree to the Agency's sharing of such information with Syria.

Interestingly, the report indicates that Syria has to date declined to have substantive discussions with the Agency, at which the Agency has offered to share all of its satellite imagery, and imagery provided by other Member States.

Outlook for June Board Meeting

¶113. (SBU) Syria is listed for the third time as an Agenda item under Nuclear Verification. The DG's Syria report provides a strong basis for calling Syria to account for its continued failure to cooperate with the IAEA investigation. The catalogue of IAEA requests that have gone unanswered clearly indicate that Syria is blocking the investigation, and the finding of more HEU should also raise concern. The only negative aspect of the DG's report is the gratuitous request for further information from Israel about the use of DU munitions. This is clearly a red herring, added by ElBaradei to inject "balance"; we expect Syria will continue to hide behind NAM statements focused on Israel. The U.S. should express regret over the nominally "equal" treatment of Israel and Syria, citing the expert analysis of the "low probability" of contamination and the fact that HEU has been discovered hundreds of miles from the Al-Kibar site.

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